

WANDA HEYWARD

Age: 58 years old
Height: 5'4-½"
Beginning weight: 262lbs
Current weight: 189-191lbs
Trainer: IFBB Pro George "Geo" Heard

What made you decide to start your fitness journey?

Like so many others, I have tried a number of diets. I remember once I decided to made one small change to start. I used to drink a lot of sodas, and I loved Mountain Dew so I just cut back on that first, then Pepsi. When I cut those out, I lost a little bit of weight. But it always came back.

I worked for Publix for about 20 years. It's been a little over a year since I've left Publix. As a deli manager, I would work long hours, 70 hours a week sometimes. I was on my feet all day, I barely had time to eat. I never had time to actually do a meal plan or diet and stick to it the way I needed to. I met George "Geo" Heard years ago, when my daughter became his first client. He would always tell her, "Let your mom know that I can help her if she wants to use me as a trainer. Because of my schedule, I just didn't entertain that idea at all. I kept telling myself I would do it on my own. But the truth is, I would miss meals, or only eat once a day sometimes. It was never healthy; I would eat a sandwich or I would eat cookies and call that a meal. It wasn't until I left Publix that I was finally ready to hear what Geo was saying. I was intrigued.

Coming up through school, I played soccer all year round. I was always athletic. Now I can feel arthritis in my knee and my back hurts me. I just had enough of aching. I was 262 lbs (to be honest I didn't weigh in until two weeks after starting the meal plan) but I listened to what Geo had to say and I started watching his meal plan and how strict he ate. Being a former athlete I'm competitive and I just put it in my mind, if he can do it, I can do it.

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Geo did a lot of research on nutrition to help me so I figured I better listen to him. He gave me a meal plan and he gave me an option of eating a "free day" once a month. I think he did that because I gave him such a hard time in the beginning. I noticed he never took the free day and once again I told myself, "if you can do it, I can do it." I was eating four times a day and I wasn't hungry at all. It was hard for me to get those four meals in but I stuck to it and then as the weeks passed, I was getting around a little bit better and it really inspired me to continue. I no longer felt like I couldn't. I was jogging now when before I felt exhausted, and my knees hurt from standing up for long hours. Now I am getting around better and the more weight that came off, the more energized and healthier I felt.





Where are you now?

At 5'4½" it was a lot of weight to carry. I've lost over 60lbs. body fat since March, 2023 and it's because I have stuck to a meal plan and been consistent doing cardio. It's been over 20 years since I've been at this weight. I fluctuate from 189 to 191.

What are your goals?

I started out giving myself short term goals, then I was trying to break 200. It actually happened on the same day Geo earned his pro card. Now I'm setting new short term goals. I don't know, the ultimate goal but I'm shooting for 140lbs. When I was growing up I never weighed enough to donate blood. In my twenties, I maintained my weight around 130lbs. I haven't weighted that little in such a long time so I'm not really sure where I'll end up. I'm more focused on eating healthier and changing my habits to a healthier lifestyle. In time, I know I will maintain a weight that's going to be right for me and my height.

You have mentioned nutrition and cardio, are you working out with weights?

About 6 months ago, we started weight training just once a week. Now we lift three times a week. We're working on building muscles and toning up. Sometimes I walk in, but I might crawl out of there. I find a way keep on going. I try to hang with Geo, but sometimes it gets a little rough for me, but I know I am so much better off. When I first started training with Geo, I only did cardio and followed my meal plan. For the first four months I did 30 minutes of cardio in the morning and 30 minutes in the evening. I have a treadmill at home so that made it easy.

So have you gone to the doctor and has he seen the changes you've made?

I actually, just switched my plan so I have a physical scheduled soon. But I was on the high blood pressure medicine with a monitor. I don't want to be on any pills. My doctor had told me, "If you lose weight, you won't have to be on the medication." That in itself was motivation for me. I had to change doctors because my insurance carrier changed but, the new doctor will see the difference from where I was. I'm hoping they're going to take me off the blood pressure medication. I'm not pre diabetic or anything and now I just feel healthier.

What's the first thing you're going to do?

I will celebrate, but not with food. I try to motivate and help other people because I'll tell you, that little bit of support that you get from other people goes a long way. We don't think about it in that way. I think just trying to give that encouragement to someone else will be my focus. I have a lot of family members. My aunts, they're in their 80s and one has sciatica, and had back surgery and knee surgery. I want to inspire her because I know how that feels and now I feel better. I want to help by working with her and talking about how to be healthier. We have season tickets to the Vanderbilt games in Tennessee. Last year going up those bleachers was tough. Now I can get up those bleachers and I can see that I inspire my family and they are asking questions. So, not a celebration like a meal out. I don't even enjoy the unhealthy foods that I used to eat because they make me feel bloated, puffy, and tired.



You're about four dress sizes from your goal. You know all rewards don't have to be food. You could go buy a new outfit!

I've actually been thinking the real reward for me will be changing my entire wardrobe and look. I got rid of all the clothes that are too big for me now because I'm not going to go back to that. But I haven't bought too many new things yet.

So now I actually train the people in the deli at the grocery stores. I have seven stores. I'm working for Boar's Head, doing the job that I love to do. I love seeing the people develop and I just love training.

Meal prepping and having my meals ready to go has made all the difference. I just grab them and go. I'm in and out of these different stores, and when it's time, I arrive at the store and put my meal in the microwave, and I take the time to eat. Now getting my meals in is important to me. It didn't take much for me to understand this process. There's always those people that say "She's not gonna last." But again, the competitive side of me makes me feel like "I'm gonna show y'all this is a whole nother breed here." Some of my stores switched and I revisited a few this year. Some of the people that knew me were doing double takes and commented on my weight loss. It started a conversation about how you can do this, the health, and how I feel. That's the biggest part for me feeling better and getting around better.



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Geo encouraged me to get on social media, so I do. I do it because I get messages about how much I've inspired people. Some of the messages are from people that were gonna start their own fitness journey and didn't. They'll ask me questions. I've sent that meal plan to a lot of people. But I tell you, the support that you get from other people, that's the kicker, right there. Just having someone in your corner saying something encouraging to you. We don't give each other enough encouragement and we don't give ourselves enough. In the past, if I knew someone on a diet I might not have thought twice about it. But now, I will say something encouraging to that person because that little thing you might say, might be the one thing that makes a difference for them that day. If you think about it, you don't know if that person is having a bad day, needs lifting up, or if a kind word will just put a smile on their face because someone noticed their effort. Every day is not easy, you know? So there's days that are struggles, no matter how long you've been doing it. So that's what I talk about mostly; the importance of encouraging someone. It's the little things.

Well, I think it's really admirable that you want to help other people, not just family members, but you know, friends as well. You are truly an inspiration and I can't wait to see you in that whole new wardrobe because I have no doubt you are going to reach your goals!